

Durham Research Online

Deposited in DRO:

07 May 2015

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Ward, Simon (2005) 'Material, image, sign : on the value of memory traces in public space.', in Memory traces : 1989 and the question of German cultural identity. Oxford: Peter Lang, pp. 281-308. Cultural history and literary imagination. (5).

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/9422>

Publisher's copyright statement:

This is an Accepted Manuscript that has been published in Memory Traces: 1989 and the Question of German Cultural Identity / edited by Silke Arnold de Simine in the series Cultural History and Literary Imagination. The original work can be found at: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/9422>. © Peter Lang AG, 2005. All rights reserved.

Additional information:

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

Material, Image, Sign:
On the Value on Memory Traces in Public Space

Simon Ward (Aberdeen)

In August 2003 the archaeologist Leo Schmidt from the Technical University of Brandenburg in Cottbus argued that barely noticeable remnants of the Berlin Wall (such as the light masts on Heinrich-Heine Strasse), which his team had spent two years documenting, might, as material testament to the Cold War, become a World Cultural Heritage site, joining such Berlin locations as the Museumsinsel and Sanssouci.¹ Amongst the mostly negative reactions to his suggestion, the spokesperson for the administration of city development argued that while it was important ‘die Mauerreste als politisches Mahnmal zu erhalten, doch sie dafür in den Rang eines Kulturerbes zu erheben, bestehe keinerlei Notwendigkeit’.²

This debate about the remains of the Wall illustrates not only that archaeologists are documenting a history that is little more than a decade old. It also indicates an uncertainty of what constitutes ‘politics’ and ‘culture’ in an increasingly image-driven society and a concomitant concern with which objects deserve to be preserved and for what reason.³ In that context, it points to the increasing number and variety of ‘ungewollter Denkmale’, to use Alois Riegl’s term for those remnants of the past that play a role within public memory

¹ C.v.L., ‘Mauerreste Weltkulturerbe?’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7.8.2003. Many parts of the Wall (such as the towers at the Bornholmer Straße and the colourful Eastside Gallery) have long been placed under preservation orders.

² Katja Fücksel, ‘Weltkulturerbe Mauer heftig umstritten’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 8.8.2003.

³ As the values of preservation policy have shifted to accept industrial architecture as a constituent part of its remit, there have been calls in recent years from some experts to limit what comes under the purview of preservation (cf. Nikolaus Bernau, ‘Städtebauliche Wegwerfkultur’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 22.9.2000) as well as attempts to focus on the difference between ‘Denkmalschutz’ and ‘Stadtbildpflege’ (cf. Norbert Huse, ‘Verloren, gefährdet, geschützt – Baudenkmale in Berlin’ in *Verloren, gefährdet, geschützt*, Berlin, 1989, pp.11-19: p.12), reflecting a more general uncertainty about the cultural-political values that underpin such institutional undertakings.

culture without having been specifically designed for that purpose.⁴ In an era when art in general, and literature in particular, has become uncertain about its public role as a conduit for memory work, this chapter looks at the processes through which physical ‘memory traces’ have manifested themselves as ‘unintended monuments’ in the public space of Berlin since 1945, paying particular attention to the period since 1989.

The shift in memory culture from the self-confidence of monuments to the contingency of traces has been considered within the context of national identity and the meaning of Holocaust monuments.⁵ Running parallel to these contexts, however, is the fetishization of the material of the past in an increasingly visual culture. Writing in 1995 on the ‘museum boom’, Andreas Huyssen argued that, ‘even if the museum as institution is now thoroughly embedded in the culture industry’, it was not commodity fetishism that was at stake.⁶ He argued that the ‘museum fetish transcends exchange value’, carrying with it something like an ‘anamnestic dimension, a kind of memory value.’⁷ One can identify two major forerunners to Huyssen’s term. This ‘memory value’ does not rely on a deep knowledge of the material object (on display), and as such has strong affinities with Alois Riegl’s term, ‘Alterswert’, used in his reflections on the ‘moderne Denkmalkultus’.⁸ Riegl recognized that ‘Alterswert’, which judged the patina of age definitive in determining the value of buildings, was gaining ground over the ‘historischen Wert’, where value was determined by antiquarian knowledge of a building’s history. Elsewhere Huyssen suggested that ‘the newfound strength of the museum and the monument in the public sphere may have something to do with the fact that they both offer something that

⁴ Alois Riegl, ‘Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung’, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Vienna, 1996. [first pub. 1903], pp.139-84: p.144.

⁵ Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces. Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, Berkeley, 2000. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven, 1993.

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, ‘Escape from Amnesia’, in *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York, 1995, pp.13-35: p.33.

⁷ Ibid, p.33.

⁸ Riegl, ‘Der moderne Denkmalkultus’, p.145,

television denies: the material quality of the object'.⁹ This again echoes Riegl, who promoted a radical conservation policy by which buildings were maintained but were eventually allowed to deteriorate and amortize their full age value 'naturally'. The perception of the patina of age is dependent on the pleasure of the spectator, indicating that such age value lay more in the aesthetic impulse than the ethical. Given that the auratic power of materiality is connected with the visual pleasure of seeing the object, another important forerunner for Huyssen's conception of 'memory value' is Walter Benjamin's consideration of 'Ausstellungswert'. For Benjamin, the cultic value of the sacred object was transferred into the value imbued into the material presence of the individual (non-reproducible) art work being exhibited.¹⁰ Both Riegl and Benjamin were attempting to describe how auratic value is established in terms of 'cultural capital'. With its roots in Riegl's and Benjamin's examination of the powerful aura of objects from the past, Huyssen's 'memory value' implies that what we may have witnessed in the last thirty years is a further stage in processes of acceleration and decomposition.

There are two major distinctions to be made, however between Huyssen and his predecessors. Firstly, both Riegl and Benjamin were writing about art and architecture, whereas Huyssen's frame of reference is much wider, indicating the expansion and increasing uncertainty of the meaning of 'culture'. Secondly, Huyssen explicitly places 'memory value' in relationship to, namely above and beyond, 'exchange value', raising the question of how this operates in public space. Huyssen writes of the power of monuments that stand in a 'reclaimed public space', implying a process that will be investigated in this paper.¹¹

Henri Lefebvre argued that space is 'produced' through the interaction of three aspects - spatial practices, the development of representative spaces, and the construction of spaces of representation. He examines the meaning of the monument within 'absolute space'

⁹ Huyssen, 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age', in *Twilight Memories*, pp.249-60: p.255.

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann / Hermann Schweppenhäuser, I.2, pp.471-508: p.484.

¹¹ Huyssen, 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory', p.255.

(which is made up of ‘sacred or cursed locations [...] a space at once indistinguishably mental and social which comprehends the entire existence of the group concerned’¹²): such monuments ‘offered each member of a society an image of that membership, [...] a collective mirror more faithful than any personal one’.¹³ Although Lefebvre writes against any straightforward teleological development, he nevertheless describes a discernible tendency for ‘absolute space’ to yield to ‘abstract space’. For Lefebvre, such monumental space is incompatible with abstract space, which is a:

medium of exchange (with the necessary implications of interchangeability) tending to absorb use. [...] It is in this space that the world of commodities is deployed, along with all that it entails: accumulation and growth, calculation, planning, programming. Which is to say that abstract space is that space where the tendency to homogenization exercises its pressure and its repression with the means at its disposal: a semantic void abolishes former meanings (without for all that, standing in the way of a growing complexity of the world and its multiplicity of messages, codes and operations).¹⁴

An important element in this transition is the ‘logic of visualization’ with the visual gaining the upper hand over the other senses. It is important to remember, however, that ‘abstract space is not homogeneous; it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its “lens”’.¹⁵ That orientation leads to the principle that ‘the entirety of space must be endowed with exchange value’.

Lefebvre suggests that a monument ‘does not have a ‘signified’ (or ‘signifieds’); rather it has a *horizon of meaning*: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings’.¹⁶ This complexity increases when one considers ‘unintended monuments’. As remnants, unintended monuments function differently from an ‘intended monument’ or museum in public space. Whereas a monument, and even more so a museum, is often allotted a privileged site, thus already implying for the user of public space some kind of

¹² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, tr. Donald Nicholson Smith, Oxford, 1991 [first pub. 1974], p.240.

¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.220.

¹⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.307.

¹⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.287.

¹⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.222.

‘transcendence’ of banal commodified interchangeable space, the ‘unintended monument’, as a potential site of development, is open to, and has constantly to battle with, the commodification of space. It is a remnant whose previous function has become redundant, but where no new function or use has been established: this allows for the establishment of memory value. It is, however, not the material form of a remnant or ruin of the past itself that responds to this pressure for space to become an exchangeable value. Rather, the memory value of the trace is invoked within the discourses of the public sphere, and this paper draws on a variety of sources that play major roles in constituting and reflecting those discourses.

Without the presence of the ruined material, the monument could not operate as a surface on to which memory value could be projected. Yet it is absence, and in particular the absence of function, that enables those projections to take place. The power of the visual, and the temporal and spatial location of the spectator, are important factors in the ‘construction’ of a ruin. For the remnant to be a ‘ruin’, it has to be seen as such. Prior to, or indeed after that moment, it is regarded as meaningless, ‘undistinguished’ material. For Alois Riegl, a Baroque palace in a state of ruin had been an object in need of restoration, not a ruin to be admired as such, like a medieval castle.¹⁷ Over the course of the twentieth century, processes of ruination have accelerated and what has been seen as a ruin has expanded. This paper looks at that processes by which unintended monuments operate in public space: what are the discourses that surround them, how are they imbued with memory value, with what kinds of memory value are they imbued, and how are those values relate to exchange value? It focuses on four ruin sites from the post-war era, all still present in the memory landscape of Berlin in 2003, and how the ‘memory value’ of these unintended monuments has been established. The Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche illustrates a number of paradigms of the workings of memory value in public space after 1945: the relationship between memory value and exchange value; the irrelevance of previous ideological function and architectural merit as well as the need for signs and borders to stabilize the workings of memory value and establish the exhibition value of the remnant. The Gestapo-Gelände,

¹⁷ Riegl, ‘Der moderne Denkmalkultus’, p.169.

best known now as the 'Topographie des Terrors', is symptomatic for how a more critical form of memory value, which developed since the 1970s, has shaped the discussion of public space following German unification. As a remnant of the GDR state, the Palast der Republik tests the strategies by which the memory value of this particular building are played off against the demands of the new unified state as well as the plans for a reconstruction of the Stadtschloss previously located on its site. The remnants on the Potsdamer Platz shed further light on the relationship between the 'urban regeneration' of post-unification Berlin, forms of 'memory value' and the dominance of the visual.

Before 1945, the Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche was an intended monument, completed in 1895 as a monument to the first Emperor of the new Reich. The church was built at the meeting-point of a number of busy roads during Berlin's rapid expansion into an industrial metropolis. By the 1920s, plans to rationalize the flow of traffic within the city had led to calls for the Gedächtniskirche to be knocked down.¹⁸ It survived those calls, but not the bombs of the Allied raid which struck on the 23rd November 1943. Although not intended to be a monument in this form, its status as a striking ruin was immediately established by photographs of post-war Berlin, and by 1949 it was being referred to as the 'Wahrzeichen und Mahnmahl des Nachkriegsberlins'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, calls for its removal were repeated as part of the general trend to ensure the most efficient circulation of goods and consumers. The Protestant Church, however, insisted on its place 'in the world'.²⁰ The vociferous newspaper campaign to maintain the ruined tower, once Egon Eiermann's plans for a modern church were revealed, invoked a particular form of 'memory value'. This was not connected with its previous Imperial ideological meaning, nor with its sacred function, nor was it based on

¹⁸ Vera Frowein-Ziroff, *Die Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, Entstehung und Bedeutung*, Berlin 1982, p.335.

¹⁹ Karl-Joachim Reutlinger, *Und trotzdem leben wir. Als Reporter im Nachkriegsberlin überall dabei*, Berlin 1997, p.258.

²⁰ Stephan Hirzel, 'Kirche im Brennpunkt der Verkehrs', *Kunst und Kirche*, 28 (1965), 8-23: 8.

the architectural merits of the ruin. Rather, it was based on the memories of traditional spatial practices of the Berlin population.²¹

The way the ruin functioned as a 'Mahnmal' or 'Wahrzeichen' was by no means unambiguous: its ethical effect was said to be achieved through its 'aesthetic power'²² or it operated either through its 'ästhetischen Reiz' or its 'mahnendes Skelett',²³ or even as an 'eindrucksvoller Kontrasts gegen das anspruchsvolle Gebaren der profanen Umgebung'.²⁴ Its meaning was equally unclear: it was a sign of 'guter und böser Erinnerung'²⁵; it was a 'Sinnbild' of loss, or it offered 'Heil in einer heillosen Welt' and an indication of the 'Bestand des Zeitlichen',²⁶ or rather it signified a 'vorläufige Sicherheit' in a confusing post-war environment.²⁷ For Werner March, architect of the original plan for post-war reconstruction of the church, it stood in 1959 as a 'Wahrzeichen' of the Berlin of 1897.²⁸ More recently, one critic thought that the stone remnants were read as the 'Auflösung einer scheinbar wertlosen Dingwelt'.²⁹

If these readings illustrate the complexity of pinning down the effects and meaning of the tower ruin, then the building itself points to that difficulty. The new ensemble, combining Eiermann's buildings with the ruin, led one writer to suggest its grotesque quality made it a genuine 'Wahrzeichen' of Cold War Berlin.³⁰ Eiermann's modernist construction, along with the commercial structures that surround it on the Breitscheidplatz, certainly accentuated the 'age value' of the tower. The whole ensemble was heightened in a material, but no less metaphorical sense by being raised above the level of the surrounding

²¹ Frowein-Ziroff, p.336. Those (pre-war) spatial practices are wonderfully described by Siegfried Kracauer in 'Ansichtspostkarte', *Frankfurter Zeitung Morgenblatt*, 26.5.1930.

²² Dietrich Worbs, *Einblicke in die Berliner Denkmal-Landschaft*, Berlin 2002, p.168.

²³ Ulrich Conrads, 'Zweierlei Maß', *Bauwelt* 48 (1957), 854-55: 55

²⁴ Thomas Schmidt, *Werner March: Architekt des Olympia-Stadions 1894 – 1976*, Basel, 1992, pp.128.

²⁵ Ulrich Conrads, 'Zweierlei Maß', 55.

²⁶ Ulrich Conrads, 'Die neue Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin', *Bauwelt* 53 (1962), 95-98: 96.

²⁷ Conrads, 'Zweierlei Maß', 855.

²⁸ Thomas Schmidt, *Werner March*, pp.128-29.

²⁹ Rolf Lautenschläger, 'Im Schatten der Superdomes', *die tageszeitung*, 8.4.1994.

³⁰ Hirzel, 'Kirche im Brennpunkt', 10.

roads through a two-metre high platform made from the rubble of the old church and the synagogue in the Fasanenstraße.³¹

There are two plaques attached to the tower. The first of these points to a dual function: to the memory of Kaiser Wilhelm I, and also the 'divine judgement', 'das in den Jahren des Krieges über unser Volk hereinbrach'. The second relates to the former entrance-hall which, with colourful frescoes celebrating the Hohenzollern dynasty, has been restored inside the tower. Marking its reopening as a 'Gedenkhalle' in 1987, the sign designates the hall 'ein Ort der Mahnung gegen Krieg und Zerstörung und ein Ruf zur Versöhnung in Jesus Christus'. This is not the only addition to the structure, however. On the opposite side of the tower, an untitled and unsigned sculpture has been grafted on to the ruin. These plaques and additions to the material of the ruin help establish its exhibition value, indicating that there is something of significance to be seen. They are, however, also of significance in demonstrating that the stones cannot speak for themselves, and as attempts to fix the meaning of the ruin through a specifically Christian narrative.

As a central feature of West Berlin's post-war memory landscape, the Gedächtniskirche was affected by unification. In 1991, the *tageszeitung* ran a series considering what should be the new Wahrzeichen of the united Berlin. In 1993 a local pastor, Martin Lotz, called for the church to be redesignated with a less nationalistic dedication, to Bertha von Suttner, Paul Schneider or Dietrich Bonhoeffer.³² This attempt to imbue the ruin with an identifiably different kind of memory value tallies with Walter Kempowski's observation that at the Gedächtniskirche 'eine instrumentalisierte Romantik wird begriffen, die Mahnung gegen den Krieg nicht'.³³ Such dissatisfaction with the visually powerful 'age value' of the ruin is, as Riegl's considerations show, not a new concern. But whereas Riegl addressed the struggle between the 'historical value' and 'age value' of a site, what dominates here is the dissatisfaction with

³¹ Conrads, 'Die neue Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche in Berlin', 174. This points to the role of technology in constructing the 'natural' ruin.

³² 'Gedächtniskirche umbenennen', *die tageszeitung*, 21.06.1993.

³³ Walter Kempowski, 'Ruine – Metapher und Wirklichkeit', in *Stadt der Architektur: Architektur der Stadt; Berlin 1900 – 2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Berlin, 2000, pp.229-235: p.233.

comforting narratives and a concern with how the present should judge the past. Nietzsche described such a perspective on history as deriving from someone, 'dem eine gegenwärtige Noth die Brust beklemmt und der um jeden Preis die Last von sich abwerfen will, hat ein Bedürfniss zur kritischen, das heisst richtenden und verurtheilenden Historie'.³⁴ This was 'critical history' and the kind of value seen in past objects in this way can be described as 'critical memory value'.

Writing from such a perspective in 1986, Dieter Bartetzko commented that the debate about what to do with the ruins of the Second World War 'versandete in den Verdrängungsakten eines Bauens, das unter der Faustregel: Erhalt der Wahrzeichen, Verschonung von Traditionsinseln bei gleichzeitig radikaler Neubebauung der Trümmerflächen, reinen Tisch machte.'³⁵ If the Gedächtniskirche was the maintained symbol, then the site of the Gestapo headquarters in the Prinz Albrecht Straße, which was right next to the Soviet zone after 1945, and had the Wall running along one side of it from 1961, was nearly the victim of radical new building. Regardless of the actual division of the city, West Berlin's urban planning was determined by the Flächennutzungsplan, established and extended since 1950, which sought to create the capital of a united Germany. The desire to produce an 'autogerechte Stadt' illustrates the tendency towards abstract space, directed to the most efficient circulation of consumers and commodities within a notional national capital. The most celebrated, and now notorious, element of that plan was the Stadtautobahn, and many of the demolitions were, ostensibly or actually, connected with this. Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm suggested that urban planning after 1945 had no language to deal with the remains of war und 'nur abriß und über alles Gras, oder Asphalt, wachsen ließ [...]'.³⁶ The language that it did have at its disposal was the grammar of abstract space. The directive that

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück. Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe III.1*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, 1972, p.260.

³⁵ Dieter Bartetzko, *Verbaute Geschichte*, Darmstadt, 1986, pp.54-5.

³⁶ Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Der stadthistorische Bestand' in *Dokumentation zum Gelände des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais und seine Umgebung*, Berlin 1983, p.36.

came from Bonn in 1962 regarding the 'Abräumung von Verwaltungsgebäuden', i.e. the former Gestapo headquarters, was part of the preparations for a new urban expressway.³⁷

The Gelände was not recognized as a 'ruin site' with memory value at this stage. Instead it was rendered low in exchange value by proximity to the wall. One part of it was a dumping ground for rubble from demolished buildings in nearby parts of Kreuzberg. Another, asphalted over, was a track for car-racing without a driving licence. The increasing importance of 'critical memory value' in the memory culture of West Germany, and West Berlin in particular, can be observed in the history of this site, whose function as a memory trace spans the period before and after unification. The critical form of memory work, which was instrumental in the late 1970s in 'uncovering' the site as the Gestapo headquarters, developed in relationship to the exchange value of public space. Michael Kraus recalls the moment when he introduced the question of the site's previous usage into the context of a planning meeting about the site:

Es war nicht unproblematisch, die bisherige Gesprächsebene plötzlich zu verlassen, auf den politischen und moralischen Hintergrund hinzuweisen, denn das konnte – und wurde von den Befürwörtern des Straßenbaus dann auch – als rein taktisches Manöver aufgefaßt werden, als ein unsachliches, emotionales und unfaires Ausweichen auf ein mit den bisher angewandten Kriterien nicht mehr rational faßbares Feld.³⁸

The invocation of such memory value at that moment radically breaks the frame of discussions about the rational ordering of space.

Descriptions of the site from the early 1980s emphasize images of absence. The site is empty, an emptiness in contrast to the traces of the site's usage over the past decades: the rubble from the building work, and the rubber tyres of the racing track. Hoffmann-Axthelm suggested that the 'wesentliche Leere' is the 'Botschaft selber': the site as a ruin points not towards the German past, but post-war

³⁷ Lore Ditzen, 'Kein Ort für einen Kranz' in *Dokumentation. Offener Wettbewerb. Berlin: Südliche Friedrichstadt. Gestaltung des Geländes des ehemaligen Prinz-Albrecht-Palais*, Berlin, 1985, p.43.

³⁸ Michael Kraus, 'Kein Ort für Straßen', *Arch+ 40/41* (1978), 14-22, 18.

indifference to the crimes of the Nazi state.³⁹ The site is discovered as an unintended monument to the repression of German history, and that lack of intention is central to its initial significance.

From the start, however, the fact that an 'unintended monument' has been intentionally discovered leads to an awareness of the ways in which the 'message itself' is made legible. The tension between aesthetic effect and ethical meaning was picked out by Hoffmann-Axthelm in considering how one might turn this 'unintended monument' into something more lasting. He pointed to the dangers of 'ästhetische[r] Lesbarkeit': 'man darf sich also nicht einfach visuell zum Standort verhalten': the last thing that should be enabled is 'ein kultiviertes Frösteln über den Rücken' of the bussed-in tourists.⁴⁰ The tension between the visual, emotional impact of the location and its potential didactic role was drawn out by Ulrich Eckhardt, who made a distinction between a emotional reaction residing in 'Selbstzufriedenheit' and its (potential) status as a 'Denkort', a 'seltsame[s], fragende[s] Gelände.'⁴¹

The potential 'critical memory value' of the site was, however, not the only value placed upon this space. Those entering the first competition, in 1983, to find an adequate way of marking the site had to include an area of recreation for the inhabitants of Kreuzberg. Conrads' commentary on the 1983 winning design by Jürgen Wenzel and Nikolaus Leng is revealing:

Was man da betritt, wird weder Hain noch Park noch Wald genannt werden können. Man wird in etwas Tot-Lebendiges hineingehen, in eine absolut künstliche Landschaft, die doch der Natur nicht ganz entbehrt [...] Die auf dem Boden ausgelegten Dokumente werden sagen, warum das so ist.⁴²

³⁹ Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Wie lesbar ist die Geschichte?', in *Rettung der Architektur vor sich selbst*, Braunschweig, 1995, pp.92-99: p. 94.

⁴⁰ Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Kultiviertes Frösteln für Touristen', in *Dokumentation. Offener Wettbewerb. Berlin*, p.37-8. Similar points were made by Ulrich Conrads and Rainer Höynck.

⁴¹ Ulrich Eckhardt, 'Braucht Berlin Gedenkstätten', in *Topographie des Terrors. Ausschreibung*, Berlin, 1993 [reprint of lecture held 11.12.1992].

⁴² Ulrich Conrads, 'Schorf aus Eisen', in *Dokumentation. Offener Wettbewerb. Berlin*, pp.39-42, p.41.

The solution combines the aesthetics of the ruin, between life and death, artifice and nature, image and materiality, with the didactic impulse of the textual. The value of the documents, reproductions of Gestapo and SS policy, is a combination of 'age value' (in their documentary authenticity), 'exhibition value' (in that they are staged) and 'critical memory value' (in that they serve a didactic purpose for the present). The winning design was attacked by the neighbourhood groups who realized that it had not really provided them with a recreational space. It was also criticized by those who thought that the design, which sealed the ground with cast-iron plates, 'closed off' the site, rather than leaving it open. Dissatisfaction with the solutions established once more the peculiarity of this space: Hoffmann-Axthelm observed that it would have been interpreted as a cursed space by pre-modern societies,⁴³ while Ulrich Conrads talked of the site being 'poisoned'.⁴⁴ There is consensus for Hämer's observation that the site can have no use value,⁴⁵ while the dangers of abstract space are summoned up in Conrads' concern that compromises could lead to the influence of 'rechnender Verwaltung',⁴⁶ as well as Hoffmann-Axthelm's warning that 'Flächenverwaltung' should not be allowed to dictate the treatment of the site.⁴⁷

A number of the 194 entries for the 1983 competition made use of architectural metaphors of excavation but the 'memory value' of the site was heightened when actual archaeological finds from the Gestapo era were made during the 1986 excavations which followed on from the polemical intervention by local historical activists a year before. These remnants dealt the Wenzel-Lang plan a final blow, and greatly enhanced the auratic power of the site,⁴⁸ while also enhancing the potential legibility of the ruin: Thomas Friedrich called the

⁴³ Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Der stadtgeschichtliche Bestand', p.64.

⁴⁴ Conrads, 'Schorf aus Eisen', p.39.

⁴⁵ Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, 'Prinz-Albrecht Palais', *Dokumentation. Offener Wettbewerb. Berlin*, p.32.

⁴⁶ Conrads, 'Schorf aus Eisen', p.41.

⁴⁷ Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Wie lesbar ist die Geschichte?', p.92.

⁴⁸ Lore Ditzen, 'Prüfsteine des Gewissens zu Bausteinen machen', in *Der umschwiegene Ort*, Berlin 1986, pp.50-53: p.51.

uncovered cells the ‘sprechendste Teil’ of the area.⁴⁹ This question of the way in which the site communicated remained difficult. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in 1981 Hoffmann-Axthelm had argued that the site was to speak, ‘und zwar ohne Schilder’,⁵⁰ but later suggested the power of the site to speak had in fact been proved by the signs that have been erected.⁵¹ This tension is also one between the intended and unintended monument. The ‘age value’ of the site had been secured by excavations displaying themselves in the centre of the city, ensuring the emotional impact of direct, visual ‘memory value’ of the site; the signs ensured the exhibition value of the remnants. The question had not been solved as how to ensure the establishment of ‘critical memory’.

The events of 1989 did not change the site itself, but did alter the location of the Gelände – it no longer ran along the border between East and West Berlin, and was in fact next to another remnant of the past, the Berlin Wall. It changed the potential exchange value of the site, but the consensus that the site should remain a monument was secure, even if there was no consensus on what kind of monument it should be. The second competition for designs to mark the site, held in 1993, reinforced the fact that the problem of legibility was an aesthetic one as much as an ethical one. Whereas the first competition had illustrated the limitations of an architecture of memory which sought to operate with direct expression, this competition was marked by more abstract approaches. Perhaps the most polemical contribution from Axel Schultes in his commentary on his design, as he imagined someone living in an apartment in the Wilhelmstraße, across the road from the Gelände:

[In] der Glotze um 19 Uhr sich die bosnische Tragödie reinziehen [...], Luft schnappen auf dem Balkon der kleinen Neugier und einen Blick nach draußen werfen, auf die ‘Topographie des Terrors’. Blauäugiger kann die Kommission nicht argumentieren. ‘Wunde, Stadt-Wunde müßte das Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände bleiben, unbebaut deshalb vor allem an der Wilhelmstraße. “Unvereinbar bevorzugte Wohnlage – wo ist hier die Wunde?” denken die Anlieger, nicht nur die Anlieger. [...] Stadt, die alles banalisierende Stadt also heraushalten, die Konfrontation mit dem

⁴⁹ Thomas Friedrich. ‘Das Gestapo- und SS-Gelände im Jahre 1987’, in *Der umschwiegene Ort*, pp.81-82: p.81.

⁵⁰ Hoffmann-Axthelm, ‘Der stadsgeschichtliche Bestand’, p.68.

⁵¹ Hoffmann-Axthelm, ‘Wie lesbar ist die Geschichte?’, p.98.

Gelände sich nicht abnützen lassen durch die Currywurstbude und die Wäsche auf dem Balkon: dazu bedarf es der härtesten Abgrenzung, die herstellbar ist.⁵²

Schultes' vision is a reckoning with the domination of the visual in contemporary culture, but also draws on the distinction, between the 'banal' abstract space of the city and the 'wound' that is the Prinz-Albrecht Gelände, that is part of the defining discourse of 'critical memory'. Schultes' wall shores up the 'critical memory value' of the site against 'mere' aesthetic perception. It would nevertheless have been a highly aesthetic solution. However, the jury thought his plan was a 'Zumutung' for those living in the Wilhelmstrasse, and it was rejected in the third round. To a certain extent, therefore, the exchange value of the accommodation nearby was a competing factor.⁵³

The winning design in the 1993 competition, by Peter Zumthor, sought to combat the stasis of the aesthetic image by combining materiality and text in his design for the documentation centre.⁵⁴ This design stresses the materiality of the experience, and attempts to avoid the intentionality of direct expression in its form. It emphasised that the visitor would be walking on the actual ground of the site, and that this would be a building 'which speaks only of its materials'. On the other hand, as with the 1983 competition winner, the legibility of critical memory would be ensured through the exhibition of the textual: it would be the documents that would speak.

At time of writing, Zumthor's design has yet to be realized, and only this year has undergone modifications so that it might keep to budget. The financial problems that have dogged the project are a reminder that the establishment of memory value comes at a price. At the same time, the comments by Andreas Nachama, the director of the

⁵² Axel Schultes [with Charlotte Frank], 'Erläuterungsbericht', in *Topographie des Terrors. Ergebnisprotokoll. Dokumentation*, Berlin 1993, pp.47-8: p.47.

⁵³ Bericht der Jury, in *Topographie des Terrors. Ergebnisprotokoll. Dokumentation*, p.52.

⁵⁴ Peter Zumthor, 'Erläuterungsbericht', in *Topographie des Terrors. Ergebnisprotokoll. Dokumentation*, p.25. Other designs were still taken with the notion of the site as an image. For example, the second prize went to Müller et al, for whom 'der Ort gleicht einem Bild voller Spuren'. Müller et al, 'Erläuterungsbericht', *Topographie des Terrors. Ergebnisprotokoll. Dokumentation*, p.33. Such readings transform the site into a 'complete' image with ALL traces, demonstrating perhaps the unavoidability of aesthetic perception and the dominance of the visual.

Stiftung “Topographie des Terrors” indicate how the ‘trace’ of the unintended monument has established itself as a paradigm of ‘memory value’ in the last twenty years:

Wer [...] die drei hohlen Zähne stehen sieht, diese Treppentürme, die nirgendwo hinführen - der wird begreifen, dass dieses Gelände in der Zwischenzeit noch eine weitere Haut hinzubekommen hat. Es hat seine Tiefenhaut, das sind die barocken Steine an der Wilhelmstraße, dann kommen die Spuren des Dritten Reiches, die Trümmerberge der Nachkriegszeit, Teile der Berliner Mauer. Und dann eben diese neue Narbe. Mit diesem Anblick terrorisiert sich die Stadt selber. Im Augenblick ist das alles zusammen ein treffendes Abbild der Berliner Republik.⁵⁵

Nachama finds ‘memory value’ for the present in Zumthor’s incomplete structure – he transforms this into a critique of the contemporary memory culture in the Berlin Republic.⁵⁶ The idea of a palimpsest of material traces is one of the paradigms established by the discourses surrounding the Topographie des Terrors for the memory value of ‘unintended monuments’ in public space. It implies a complex engagement with the past, in which the critical memory value of the material trace is asserted, but its explication is complicated by the interaction of the image, materiality and the textual interpretation of the trace. The second paradigm is the assumption that demolition is a failed attempt to expunge history. Brian Ladd concludes that ‘it is now clear that destroying the buildings on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße and covering their foundations neither obliterated the memory of them nor enabled Berliners to come to terms with their own history’.⁵⁷ Of course this was never *explicitly* the policy, and more work may need to be done on the ways in which the demands of abstract space and the trends of German memory culture dovetailed after 1945. The third paradigm is the idea that the memory value of the trace must remain an irritant against the encroachments of abstract space, to ‘keep the wound open’.

These paradigms evolved within the context of a critical engagement with the Second World War and the ‘abstract’ urban

⁵⁵ Volker Müller, ‘Wie hohle Zähne’: Mahnmal und “Topographie” warten auf Weiterbau - hat sich die Berliner Republik übernommen?, *Berliner Zeitung*, 27.1.03.

⁵⁶ The term ‘hohler Zahn’ is an ironic reference to a popular description of the Gedächtniskirche.

⁵⁷ Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, Chicago 1997, p.163.

planning which came in its wake. They have, however, been readopted in the discussion of the remnants of the GDR, as can be seen in the discussion of the Palast der Republik. The Palast stands on the site of the Stadtschloss, which had been damaged in that war, but was ultimately razed to the ground on the orders of Walter Ulbricht in 1950. *Neue Zeit* commented in 1991 in the debate about what to do with the Palace, that demolition had never been a good way of dealing with the past (and often, ironically, Ulbricht's treatment of the Schloss has been cited as evidence of this).⁵⁸ The series of traces as a palimpsest of the historical process was invoked, for example, by Federal President Roman Herzog, who envisaged a solution that combined both the Palast der Republik and a rebuilt Schloss.⁵⁹

The Palast der Republik was built between 1973 and 1976 as a multi-function building. It was the site of the infrequent meetings of the Volkskammer, but precisely for that reason it can barely be considered the seat of real power in the GDR (this was not far away, where the ZK of the SED met). For many, it was and is not a symbol of the SED dictatorship, 'zu zivil, zu unschlüssig und vielschichtig ist die wahre Botschaft des Gebäudes'.⁶⁰ It was a place for state occasions, such as the infrequent party conferences of the SED. As a prominent marker of the shift in the GDR towards a more consumer-oriented socialism, the Palace was also designed as a place for a wide variety of cultural and leisure activities. It had been seen as a piece of international modernist architecture; 'man war – und ist – stolz darauf, daß man sich dies einzige Stück Weltstandard vom Mund abgespart hat'.⁶¹ The Palace was closed by the GDR government on 19th September 1990 before unification took place for health and safety reasons. The use of asbestos in its construction meant that the building needed a programme of renovation before it could be safely used. The demise of the GDR and the closure because of asbestos removed both its major functions.

⁵⁸ Norbert Schwaldt, 'Krieg dem Palast, Friede dem Schloß?', *Neue Zeit*, 4.05.1991.

⁵⁹ Letter from the Bundespräsidialamt, 25.4.1996, reproduced in *Der Palast muß weg weg weg*, Berlin 1996.

⁶⁰ Thomas Kuppinger, 'Friede den Palästen', *Zitty*, 25/1991, p.23.

⁶¹ Thomas Kuppinger, 'Friede den Palästen', p.23.

If, as was the case with its West Berlin counterpart, the Internationales Congress Centrum, it had simply been a ruin of a modern building technology that in only a decade had gone from being a universal practice to a byword for a creeping, invisible form of danger and decay, then this might not have provided further comment.⁶² As the emblem of a modernizing socialist state, however, it could also be read as the emblematic ruin of that project, and thus two conceptions of a ruined modernity could be elided in the image of the Palace as an 'Asbest-Ruine'. At this stage, though, the building was not beyond renovation, not did it *appear* to be a ruin, except for those who saw it as a ruin of a debased form of modernist architecture. Over the decade since it was closed, the number of personnel looking after the palace has been continually reduced, the supply of water and electricity have been cut off. Time, the most perennial of the processes of ruination has been working away on the palace over this period, followed, finally, by the dramatic internal de(con)struction caused by the process of removing the asbestos.

Like the Gestapo-Gelände, the period of time the site spent as an unintended monument is important in the development of its meaning as such a monument. The Palast der Republik is different in that it has been seen as an unintended monument while the process of ruination is taking place. In discussing the reasons for the closure (and continued closure) of the Palast der Republik, the building becomes the projection for other concerns. Both Bruno Flierl (in *taz* 11.5.91) and Norbert Schwaldt argued in May 1991 that it was not closed for reasons of asbestos. Johann Friedrich Geist was even more direct, suggesting that it was 'ein politischer Akt; man wollte stilllegen, was populär war, man wollte ein spektakuläres Opfer'.⁶³ Others reported the Bundesministerium as arguing that it was architecturally outdated;⁶⁴ Peter Conradi (SPD MP) suggested in 1996 that it was

⁶² The irony is, of course, that the asbestos came from Britain, and the building practice was as common in West as East Germany

⁶³ Johann Friedrich Geist, 'Der Palast der Republik aus westlicher Sicht', in *Der Palast muß weg weg weg*, pp.23-30, p.26.

⁶⁴ Eva Schweitzer, 'Palast der Republik droht jetzt doch die Abrißbirne', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 4.10.92.

being deliberately allowed to grow dilapidated, an argument also made by Professor Wolf Eisenhardt.⁶⁵

The Palace is different from the two previous ruins in that few people argue for its preservation in a ruinous state. Nevertheless its status as a building that no longer fulfils its previous function has mobilized its memory value. One form of memory value is invoked by those who worked and used the Palace, those whose spatial practices made this into not just a space of representation for the GDR hierarchy, but also a representative space for moments when the personal found a social location. Those demanding the maintenance of the Palace assert the value of the memories they associate with the space. The building provides the focus for those memories (and thus for an ambivalent relationship to the GDR state).⁶⁶ This form of memory value offers clear parallels to the defence of the Gedächtniskirche in the immediate post-war era.

Other forms of memory value have been suggested. For example, for Professor Eisenhardt, the Palast had cultural-historical value,⁶⁷ while for Peter Strieder, then development senator in Berlin, saw the Palast as having political memory value as a piece of the history of the Federal Republic (as the site where the Volkskammer voted to join the Republic via Article 23).⁶⁸ The variety of perspectives demonstrate that the Palast, as a building which has lost its function, becomes the projection site for different forms of memory value. The *Tagesspiegel* points towards the difference between spatial interaction with the building and a remnant that has been reduced to a distant image: 'Das 'Haus des Volkes' war nun einmal eine Ost-Beziehungskiste, der West-Mensch sieht heuer lediglich die toten Augen und fragt sich, was das Ganze denn nun noch soll.'⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Cited in Heinz G. Behnert, *Palast/Palazzo 1973/1998. Das Denkmalsbuch zum Palast der Republik*, Berlin, 1997, p.189, p.192.

⁶⁶ For example, Hans Jacobus, 'Erinnerungen' in *Kampf um den Palast*, ed. Rudolf Ellereit / Horst Wellner, Berlin 1994, pp.81-2. Indeed many of the contributions to *Kampf um den Palast* and *Der Palast muß weg weg weg* invoke this kind of memory value.

⁶⁷ Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut, 'Kontrapunkte' in *Kampf um den Palast*, pp.73-5.

⁶⁸ Report of parliamentary discussion of 17 April 1996 in *Der Palast muß weg weg weg*, p.81.

⁶⁹ n.n., 'Palast der Gefühle', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 27.3.1993.

As Otto Merk observed in 1991, tourists could have no idea what this building means: 'Hinweistafeln, wenigstens vorläufige, die etwas über den kaum zu übersehenden Bau (und die anderen Gebäude am Marx-Engels-Platz) aussagen, sind wohl zu teuer.'⁷⁰ The Palace itself would not seem to have had exhibition value in itself - although its paintings were displayed as an historical exhibition at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in 1996.

There are currently sixty-eight signs close to the Palast der Republik: these, however, posted on to the wooden fence surrounding the building, tell the history of the space now occupied by the Palace and the Schlossplatz (the history of the Palace is presented on two of these). The various forms of memory value associated with the Palace cannot be established without reference, however negative, to the exchange value of the site, for it does operate as a potential hindrance both to an increasingly abstract efficiency in the use of space, and to a drawing-board reconstruction of the heart of the Prussian city. Initially this was either in terms of whether a renovated Palace could pay for itself on the open market, or what else could be built that would be most profitable. Later there were the general consideration of cost: how much does it cost to maintain the Palace in various states of (dis)repair; how much would various forms of asbestos removal cost; how much would a renovation of the Palace cost; how much would a reconstruction of (elements of) the Stadtschloss cost?

It is an irony that another form of memory value is associated with the former Stadtschloss that, for many decades, had no visible material presence and has nothing to do with the recollection of spatial practices. The presence of the Schloss was indicated in many journalistic descriptions of the building, as journalists reflect on the fact that, following its closure, the way into the Palace is through a cellar entrance which was a remnant of the Schloss structure. Excavations carried out on the Schlossplatz have allowed the display of foundations whose mundanity is reminiscent of those exhibited along the Niederkirchnerstrasse at the Topographie des Terrors. It has often been argued that plans for a reconstructed Stadtschloss would involve the erasing of historical distinctions. The facade erected around the Palace in 1993 was a blatant indication that a future

⁷⁰ Otto Merk, 'Schandfleck der Republik', *Berliner Zeitung*, 29.7.1992.

reconstructed Schloss will invoke memory value without even the slightest patina of age: its material presence will not even rely on the auratic power of being 'original', thus giving it a form of exhibition value which is different to that conceived by Benjamin. In the eyes of many commentators, it will be the triumph of 'Stadtbildpflege' over both critical and antiquarian memory value.⁷¹

After wranglings that have gone on for a decade, it does appear that the Palast der Republik will be demolished. At time of writing, in September 2003, the asbestos removal work which, although not quite the final act in the process of ruination, has meant the removal of almost all signs of the previous uses which the building had. The interior of the Palace now has the archetypal visual attraction of the ruin (this designation is practically unanimous in print media discussions of the building) with its skeletal steel structures attracting the likes of Christian von Borries to the 'rückgebaute, entkernte Palast als künstlich hergestellte Ruine aus dem Nachlass eines untergegangenen Staates' which provides the 'mythenträchtigen, extrem mit Bedeutung geladenen Ort' for his musical experimentation.⁷² The ruin now offers the possibilities of a different kind of cultural value.

The discussion surrounding the Palace has undoubtedly been influenced by the different paradigms we saw in the case of both the Gedächtniskirche and the Gestapo-Gelände. There is the importance of previous spatial practices, the irrelevance of previous ideological significance and architectural merit for the value of the ruin. There is also, however, the employment of strategies of 'critical memory value', and the remnant as an irritant to the increasing abstraction of space. The tension between the visual form of the remnant and its legibility, which remains evident, is integral in making such remnants potential sites of debate in public space, helping in the generation of narratives and in the establishment of differing memory values.

Furthermore, however, the fate of the Palace and the future Schloss points to a tendency towards the 'exhibition value' of the past in spaces dominated by 'representations of space' rather than 'representative spaces'. In the 1990s, the most prominent example of

⁷¹ See, for example, Dieter Axthelm-Hoffmann, 'Zumutung Berliner Schloß – und wie man ihr begegnen könnte', in *Die Rettung der Architektur vor sich selbst*, pp.100-113.

⁷² Peter Laudenbach, 'Dirigent auf Montage', *tip*, 15/2003, pp. 56-7.

the production of abstract space dominated by visual 'representations of space' is the Potsdamer Platz. The physical state of the square before 1989 was a remnant of the outcome of the Second World War: the division of Berlin into four sectors, and the building of the Berlin Wall. The ruinous condition of Potsdamer Platz (the predication for its fetishization within memory value) was directly linked to the low exchange value of the site.

The potential of the space was transformed by the events of the *Wende*. The famous scene set in the pre-*Wende* wilderness in Wim Wenders' 1989 film *Der Himmel über Berlin* demonstrated, however, that the invocatory power of the name had never fully disappeared. Indeed, the historical Potsdamer Platz was invoked by those planning the creation of a new centre in this space, most conventionally by the new owners of the space and most radically perhaps by Daniel Libeskind.⁷³ The construction of a new Potsdamer Platz also had to deal with the reality that the space was not empty. In contrast to the Palast der Republik, there were few people who could invoke the memory value of specific spatial practices associated with the site in the 1920s, and those who had used it since the Second World War, such as those living in the Wagenburg, had a very different attitude to spatial organization. While the Wagenburg was moved elsewhere, there were also less mobile physical remnants: two major buildings: Hotel Esplanade and Weinhaus Huth, and a row of trees as a reminder of what had previously been the Potsdamer Strasse. It had been established that all three remnants had to be maintained in any reconstruction of the Platz. In other words, whereas those defending Gestapo-Gelände and the Palast der Republik sought to legitimize their forms of memory value, the new Potsdamer Platz had to negotiate with an established 'memory value' of the sites. The answer was to incorporate the memory traces into the corporate citadel and by doing so reinterpret their memory value.

The remnants of the past that are to be found at Potsdamer Platz are exhibits in the architectural display. In technologically very complex manoeuvres, Weinhaus Huth was incorporated into the surrounding buildings of the Daimler Quarter and the 'Kaisersaal' of

⁷³ Daimler Benz, *Potsdamer Platz*, Berlin, 1995, p.2. Daniel Libeskind, *radix-matrix*, Munich, 1997, pp.59-61.

the Hotel Esplanade was transplanted to be incorporated into the Sony Centre. It need hardly be said that both are sites of visual and physical consumption. The trees in the Potsdamer Strasse, which had survived the planning for Speer's Germania, and the post-war building of the Wall and the Kulturforum, were incorporated into the re-named Alte Potsdamer Strasse. The S-Bahn sign that had stood by the Wall throughout the years of the Cold War was incorporated into the Sony Tower when it was renamed Bahn Tower after the Deutsche Bahn moved its headquarters there. The other major remnant of the past was, of course, the Berlin Wall, of which currently (September 2003) one slab is to be found by the entrance to the S-Bahn, and a further series of slabs are to the south of the square along with the remains of a former watchtower, while another slab is currently situated on the not-yet-completed Leipziger Platz. In addition, there is a reconstruction of the famous green signal box from the 1920s. Its lights change, but it has no bearing in controlling the circulation of the traffic.

Three aspects of these remnants need to be drawn out. Firstly, their artificiality. They could not have been maintained 'naturally' in their condition within all the new construction that has taken place. In that sense, not only the signal box is the simulacrum of a material remnant. Secondly, there is the use of signs. In the case of both the S-Bahn sign and Hotel Esplanade, these signs do not locate the meaning of these remnants in their fate during the post-war era. Rather, reference to the bullet hole in the S-Bahn sign relates its memory value to the Second World War, rather than, say, its emblematic quality as a remnant of divided Berlin; the Hotel Esplanade's signs point towards the hotel's role in the Wilhelmine Empire. These signs offer narratives that work against the potential for the trace as a palimpsest of historical processes. Even more striking than the use of signs is, thirdly, the employment of glass. This way of presenting traces has also become fashionable in the presentation of the memory landscape in Berlin, if one thinks of Foster's glass cupola, and more particularly the graffiti left by the Russian soldiers at the Reichstag in 1945. The meaning of the remnants on Potsdamer Platz is fixed in a quite specific fashion: a remnant is an object behind glass. They have become intended monuments whose meaning, however, is exhausted in exhibition value. The glass exhibits the aura, but also

dematerializes and neutralizes it. The glass makes the objects almost invisible: instead you have a reflection of the spectator in the glass. The new Potsdamer Platz establishes the exhibition value of these remnants. These remnants are no longer irritants in the smooth efficient functioning of an interchangeable abstract space, but belong to the exhibition spectacle. This memory value is a combination of age value and exhibition value. What matters on Potsdamer Platz is the image of the past: the structures in the area makes positive use of the allegorical way of seeing by using signs and putting the objects behind glass.

The meaning of material traces in public space is always in part a reflection of the values of the spectator, but not only that. The processes at work might be described through a number of paradoxes. First, the paradox that very different notions of memory value rely on the material's status as a remnant without a function to generate memory value. Second, the paradox that the fetish of materiality operates as a counterpoint to an image-dominated culture, but that the material often has to be transformed into an image in order to make its materiality legible. Third, the paradox that the material and the image cannot do without signs and written texts to ensure their meaning and indeed often their exhibition value.

Daniel Libeskind's radical 'angel trapping history' design for the Potsdamer Platz can be read as a fruitful artistic-architectural engagement with such paradoxes. That plan was not put into practice, although the more traditional memory space of the museum has been enriched by his Jewish Museum in Berlin. As the continuing wranglings over the realization of his designs for the memorial space at Ground Zero illustrate however, the 'unintended monument' remains subject to the pressures of abstract space and exchange value.